

Libraries, Books, and Transmission of Knowledge in Ilkhanid Baghdad

Michal Biran

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

biranm@mail.huji.ac.il

Abstract

The destruction of the Baghdadi libraries has been a powerful image connected to the Mongol conquest of 1258, often claimed to have precipitated the decline of Muslim civilization. This study, however, challenges this claim by reconstructing the state of libraries in Ilkhanid Baghdad, revealing a thriving intellectual community. Based on a close reading in Arabic biographical dictionaries and analysis of *samāʿ* and book lists, it elucidates the functions of libraries in Ilkhanid Baghdad, identifies channels of knowledge transmission, and offers a glimpse of the libraries' holdings. Finally, it analyzes the Mongols' role in invigorating local scholarship and the impact their rule had on Baghdad's intellectual life.

Keywords

Baghdad – libraries – Ilkhanate – Mongols in the Muslim world – intellectual history of the islamicate World

Introduction

Despite the recent burgeoning literature on Islamic libraries and book culture,¹ the libraries of Ilkhanid Baghdad have not yet been extensively

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1 E.g., M. Fierro, S. Stroumsa and S. Schmidtke, eds., *Histories of Books in the Islamicate World, Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 4/4-5 (2016), 5/1-2 (2017); K. Hirschler, *Medieval*

studied.² This is not only due to the relative inaccessibility of documentary sources, but also because the intellectual activity in Ilkhanid Baghdad has been overshadowed by the powerful image of the destruction of the city and its flourishing libraries during the Mongol conquest of 1258. Indeed, while the scholarly verdict on Mongol conquest and rule in the Middle East has become much more nuanced in the last decades, and the cultural efflorescence of the Ilkhanate is nowadays celebrated nearly as much as Mongol violence is condemned,³ the study of Ilkhanid Baghdad is still marred by the decline paradigm. The Mongols' destruction of the Abbasid libraries is envisioned as a symbol for the disastrous effect of the Mongol conquest, which is assumed to have ushered in the decline of Islamic civilization and the rise of the west. Such a claim is especially enduring in popular and semi-popular works in both Arabic and Western languages,⁴ as well as in quite a few modern studies of Islamic libraries.⁵

Damascus: Plurality and Diversity in an Arabic Library: The Ashrafiyya Library Catalogue (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016); idem, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012); M. J. al-Musawi, *The Medieval Islamic Republic of Letters: Arabic Knowledge Construction* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015).

- 2 For earlier studies, see K. 'Awwād, *Khazā'in al-kutub al-qadima fi al-'Irāq mundhu aqdam al-'uṣūr ḥattā sanat 1000 lil-hijra* (Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-Ma'ārif, 1948): 141-74; 185-7; 270-76; N. Ma'rūf, *Ta'rikh 'ulamā' al-Mustanṣiriyya* (2nd. ed. Cairo: Dār al-Sha'b, 1965), 2: 57-120.
- 3 E.g., T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); G. Lane, *Early Mongol Rule in Thirteenth-Century Iran. A Persian Renaissance* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); J. Pfeiffer, ed. *Politics, Patronage, and the Transmission of Knowledge in 13th-15th Century Tabriz* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); B. De Nicola and C. Melville, eds., *The Mongols' Middle East: Continuity and Transformation in Ilkhanid Iran* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016); P. Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World. From Conquest to Conversion* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017): 2-6, 391-418.
- 4 E.g., R. al-Sarghānī, *Qisṣat al-Tatar* (Cairo: Mu'assasat Iqrā', 2006); Aḥmad Maṣṣūr, *Qisṣat suqūt Baghdād*, (Beirut: al-Dār al-'Arabiyya lil-'Ulūm; Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2003); J. Marozzi, *Baghdad: City of Peace, City of Blood* (London: De Capo Press, 2014): 135-60; J. Al-Khalili, *The House of Wisdom: How Arabic Science Saved Ancient Knowledge and Gave Us the Renaissance* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011); W. R. Polk, *Understanding Iraq: The Whole Sweep of Iraqi History, from Genghis Khan's Mongols to the Ottoman Turks to the British Mandate to the American Occupation* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005); M. Hasan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate: A Transregional History* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016): 20-65. Cf. Iraqi writers of the mid-20th century whose verdict on Ilkhanid Baghdad is much more positive: Ma'rūf, *al-Mustanṣiriyya*, 1: 45-52; J. Khisbāk, *al-'Irāq fi 'ahd al-mughūl al-ilkhānīyīn 656-736 h, 1258-1335 m* (Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-'Ānī, 1968): a-h.
- 5 E.g. Y. Eche, *Les bibliothèques arabes publiques et semi-publiques en Mésopotamie, en Syrie et en Égypte au Moyen Age* (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1967): esp. 199; M. Sibai, *Mosque Libraries: An Historical Study* (London: Mansell Publishing House, 1987); 'A Kattānī, *Ta'rikh al-maktabāt al-Islāmīya wa-man allafa fi al-kutub* (al-Rabāt: Markaz al-Dirāsāt wa-l-Abḥāth

This study, however, challenges this claim by reconstructing the state of the libraries in Ilkhanid Baghdad. It analyzes the functioning of the libraries in Mongol-ruled Baghdad from the conquest onwards, features the careers of some local librarians and bibliophiles, identifies channels of knowledge transmission and offers a glimpse of the libraries' holdings. Following the picture of a thriving intellectual community that the sources reveal, the article then analyzes the role of the Mongols in invigorating Baghdadi scholarship and the impact their rule had on the city's intellectual scene.

The study is based on a close reading in mainly contemporaneous literary sources from both the Ilkhanate and the Mamluk Sultanate, often the same chronicles and biographical dictionaries cited for Mongol atrocities. It also analyses certificates of hearing (*samā'āt*)⁶ and book lists, juxtaposing their data with the information culled from the literary sources.

The main source for this study is *Majma' al-ādāb fī mu'jam al-alqāb* ("The Collected Literatures regarding the Dictionary of Nicknames"), the biographical dictionary by the Baghdadi librarian and polymath Ibn al-Fuwaṭī (644/1246-723/1323). Born and raised in Abbasid Baghdad, where he studied with the famous scholar Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654/1256), Ibn al-Fuwaṭī witnessed the Mongol conquest. In 656/1258 he was captured by Hülegü's troops and taken to Adharbaijan. Shortly afterwards Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), Hülegü's advisor and one of the era's leading polymaths (to be discussed below), brought him to the Maragha observatory, where he first studied and then served as the observatory's librarian for more than a decade. In 679/1280, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī returned to his hometown at the behest of 'Alā' al-Dīn Juwaynī (d. 682/1283), the governor of Baghdad (657-682/1259-83). There he was employed as a librarian in Baghdad's main library, that of al-Mustanṣiriyya college, for ca. 25 years. In 704/1304 he began traveling between Adharbaijan and Baghdad, and returned permanently to Baghdad only in 718/1318, after the execution of his new patron, the Ilkhanid vizier and historian Rashīd al-Dīn. During his last years, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī continued to work on his book, completing it in ca. 722/1322.⁷

wa-lḥyā' al-Turāth, 2013): esp. 107 (originally compiled in the 1950s); cf. Hirschler, *The Written Word*: 124-34.

- 6 *Samā'āt* (lit. hearings) are lists of people who listened to a certain lecture or reading of a manuscript. Inclusion in the list served also as a certificate for the listeners, allowing them to transmit what they had heard to others. Such lists can be found at the end of manuscripts, on their title page, or between parts and chapters. R. Sellheim, "Samā." In *EL2*, online edition.
- 7 On Ibn al-Fuwaṭī see, e.g., F. Rosenthal, "Ibn al-Fuwaṭī." In *EL2* online edition; C. Melville, "Ebn al-Fowaṭī, Kamāl al-Dīn 'Abd-Al-Razzāq." *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranica-online.org/articles/ebn-al-fowati>; M. R. Shabībī, *Mu'arrikh al-Trāq Ibn al-Fuwaṭī* (Baghdad: al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Irāqī, 1950); D. DeWeese, "Cultural Transmission and Exchange in the

Maǧmaʿ al-ādāb, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's only surviving work,⁸ is arranged according to *laqabs* (nicknames, appellations, e.g., 'Izz al-Dīn or al-Qāhir). This arrangement enabled Ibn al-Fuwaṭī to incorporate in his dictionary quite a few non-Muslims—including Mongols, Jews and Christians—all situated within an Arabic-Islamic classification system. It is hard to evaluate Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's prosopographical outlook, since his work has survived only in an abbreviated and fragmentary form.⁹ However, as Devin DeWeese has shown, even the little that remains is tremendously valuable for Ilkhanid social and cultural history. This is not only because many of the recorded people are contemporaries of Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, whom he knew personally. He also often records the sources—both oral and written—of his information; gives cross-references to individuals and books mentioned in other parts of the work, thereby enabling the reconstruction of scholarly networks; and records books that he saw, heard being recited, or read.¹⁰ His long tenure at the Mustanṣiriyya library and first-hand accounts make him an indispensable source for information on Baghdadi libraries.

1 Pre-Mongol Baghdadi Libraries

Late Abbasid Baghdad, which the Mongols encountered, was known for its magnificent libraries. Indeed, in the early 15th century, the Egyptian encyclopedist al-Qalqashandī (d. 820 /1418) began his discussion of libraries by mentioning the largest Islamic book collections of the past, starting with that of the Abbasids in Baghdad:

The first, the library of the Abbasid Caliphs in Baghdad, which included books beyond measure that were valuable beyond anything else. It had been like this until the Mongols destroyed Baghdad and their king Hulāgū

Mongol Empire: Notes from the Biographical Dictionary of Ibn al-Fuwaṭī." In *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. Linda Komaroff (Leiden: Brill, 2006): 11-29.

8 The local chronicle of Iraq, *Kitāb al-ḥawāḍith wa-huwa al-kitāb al-musammā wahman bi-ḥawāḍith al-jāmi'a wa-al-tajārib al-nāfi'a wa-al-mansūb li-Ibn al-Fuwaṭī* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1997), was previously attributed to Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, but is now considered anonymous.

9 The surviving part, which includes only the letters *ʿayn* through *mīm*, i.e., less than a third of the book, consists of 5129 short entries, which fill five volumes. They are part of an abridgement (*talkhīs*) of a larger compilation.

10 DeWeese, "Cultural Transmission": 13-16.

killed al-Mustaʿsim, the last of their Caliphs in Baghdad, and the library went as all the earth, its traces were gone, and its remnants distributed.¹¹

Reading this text, it is easy to conclude both that the Mongols ruined the Baghdadi libraries and that the main library of Abbasid Baghdad was the caliphal library. Both suppositions, however, are incorrect. I will shortly examine the first assumption, and as for the second, while the caliphal library may have been the city's main library in the heyday of *bayt al-ḥikma* in the 9th century, this was not the case in 13th-century Baghdad.¹² Al-Qalqashandī himself describes the next stage of the evolution of Islamic libraries when he says: "Nowadays the rulers' interest in the libraries has faded. They content themselves with libraries in the college (*madrasa*), as they consider these of greater necessity."¹³ Indeed, since the rise of the colleges, their libraries had become the main city libraries. They were open to the public, and funded as part of endowment complexes. Smaller endowed libraries existed in mosques, shrines (*mashhads*) and hospices (*ribāṭs*), funded by either the caliph or the local elite—military, administrative or scholarly. The caliphs kept their private libraries but these were usually of marginal importance in comparison with the colleges' ones.¹⁴

The last Abbasid caliphs were instrumental in founding celebrated libraries. The Caliph al-Nāṣir (r. 575-622/1118-1225) greatly enlarged the library of Baghdad's then leading college, al-Nizāmiyya, building a whole new wing that was named after him, al-Nāṣiriyya. In addition, he established libraries, which housed at least several Qur'an copies and often additional books, in hospices, shrines, mosques and colleges that continued to flourish after him.¹⁵ According to a 604/1207 appointment letter, the larger mosque libraries, such as the one in Mashhad Abū Ḥanīfa (which was founded before al-Nāṣir's reign), employed librarians who were responsible for registering the books, comparing the catalog to the actual inventory, and trying to retrieve missing books. They were also tasked with maintaining the books by dusting and repairing, as well as making

11 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā fī šināʿat al-inshā* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1987), 1: 537.

12 On *Bayt al-Ḥikma*, see D. Gutas and K. van Bladel, "Bayt al-Ḥikma," *El3*, online edition.

13 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā*, 1: 537.

14 Hirschler, *The Written Word*: 134-6.

15 Eche, *Bibliothèques*: 170-2; Šafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2008), 6: 310-16; Dhahabī, *Sīyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ* (4th ed. Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Risāla, 1986), 22: 192-243.

sure that only reliable individuals who left deposits were permitted to borrow library books.¹⁶

The most prominent library in pre-Mongol Baghdad, which continued to function under the Ilkhans as well, was that of the Mustanşiriyya college that was opened by the Caliph al-Mustanşir (r. 623-40/1226-42) in 631/1234. The library comprised 160 loads of books (later estimated as 80,000 volumes), thematically classified, on a range of topics, from religion, to *belles-lettres* (*adab*) and the sciences. Originally organized by the caliph's private librarian, the library was administrated by a team of three appointees: a librarian (*khāzin*), an assistant librarian or inspector (*mushrif*), and a clerk (*mutanāwil*), all paid by the Mustanşiriyya's generous endowment. The library also included reading rooms in which, for instance, the study of prophetic traditions took place. It catered foremost to the college's staff and students, who numbered more than three hundred, as well as the wider intellectual community, many of its members are recorded to be present at the library's opening ceremony.¹⁷

Al-Mustanşiriyya's library retained a prominent place under the last Abbasid caliph, al-Mustaʿşim bi-Allāh (r. 640-656/1242-58), and visiting dignitaries were given a tour of it.¹⁸ Al-Mustaʿşim, however, also founded his own private library as soon as he ascended the throne, and later created a separate library for his most precious books, housed in a room next to the former library. He employed as librarians his own tutor, Ibn al-Nayyār (d. 656/1258), as well as the noted calligrapher and musician Şafī al-Dīn al-Urmawī (d. 693/1294), who was appointed to the rare books collection. The librarians copied books for the caliph and themselves, and researched references for inquiring scholars. The caliph certainly spent time browsing through his book collection, and Ibn al-Ṭiqṭaqā's unsympathetic remark that no matter how long he stayed in the library, it would do him no good, should be taken with a grain of salt, as al-Mustaʿşim's *hadīth* collections were studied in Ilkhanid Baghdad.¹⁹

16 Ibn al-Sāʿī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-mukhtasar*, vol. 9 (Baghdad: Imprimerie Syrienne Catholique, 1934): 233-7; Eche, *Bibliothèques*: 194; Sibai, *Mosque Libraries*: 113.

17 *Kitāb al-ḥawādith*: 80-6; Dhahabī, *Taʾrikh al-Islām* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1987-2004), 54: 7-9; Eche, *Bibliothèques*: 172-80; ʿAwwād, *Khazāʾin*: 163-71. The students included 248 law students, 10 *hadīth* learners, 30 Qurʾan readers, 10 students of medicine, as well as teachers (24 for law—1 lecturer, 1 vice-lecturer and 4 assistants (*muʾids*) for each Sunni school—2 Qurʾan readers, 1 traditionalist (*muḥaddith*), 1 physician, and 1 math teacher). On al-Mustanşiriyya in general see Maʾrūf, *Mustanşiriyya*, esp. 2: 167-70 (the *waqf*).

18 *Kitāb al-Ḥawādith*: 118-19.

19 Ibn al-Ṭiqṭaqā, *Al-Fakhrī fī al-ādāb al-sultāniyya wa-al-duwal al-islāmiyya* (Paris: Librairie Émile Bouillon, 1895): 319-21 and *Al-Fakhrī on the Systems of Government and the Moslem Dynasties*, tr. C. E. J. Whitting (London: Luzac, 1947): 448-51; Şafadī, *al-Wāfī*, 19: 342-3; Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafayāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2000), 2: 31-2; *Kitāb*

In addition to these institutional libraries, a number of private individuals too owned impressive book collections. Especially noteworthy were the libraries of Ibn al-ʿAlqamī (d. 657/1259), al-Mustaʿīm's notorious Shiʿite vizier, which is described as containing 10,000 books,²⁰ and the library of Ibn Tāwūs (d. 1266/664), the city's leading Shiʿite authority. Ibn Tāwūs's library, meticulously studied by Ethan Kohlberg, contained some 1500 works, ca. 670 of which are identifiable. Of these, 75% belong to religious studies (including Qurʾanic exegesis, tradition, theology, law, polemics, eschatology, heresiography, supplications); some 7% to *belles-lettres* (*adab*) and the rest (18%) to the sciences, mainly astronomy.²¹ Scholars often endowed both specific books and whole collections to their favorite institution, hence libraries could easily shift from private to public ownership.²²

2 The 1258 Conquest and the Libraries

Unlike the plunder and the massacres that appear in almost every description of the Mongol conquest of Baghdad, and despite the popular image, references to the destruction of books and libraries are rare, late—mainly from the mid-14th century onward—and often clearly anachronistic. A glaring—and often quoted—example is the description by Quṭb al-Dīn al-Nahrawālī, a 16th-century historian of Mecca, who details the behavior of Hülegü's soldiers: "They threw the books of the Baghdadi colleges into the Euphrates (*baḥr al-furāt*) and [the books] were so many that they became a bridge on which the riders and footmen passed, and the color of the river changed into black from their multitude."²³ The mention of the Euphrates instead of the Tigris, as well as the description of Hülegü as arriving at Baghdad after annihilating the Khwārazm Shāh (whose kingdom was conquered by Chinggis

al-Ḥawādith: 192, 212; Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq, *Kitāb marāṣid al-iṭṭilāʾ fī maʿrifat al-amkina wa-l-biqā* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifā lil-Ṭibāʾa wa-lil-Nashr, 1944-5), 3: 162; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ al-ādāb fī muʿjam al-aḳāb* (Tehran: Muʾassasat al-Ṭibāʾa wa-l-Nashr, 1995), 3: 400, 470; 4: 532; 5: 7-8, 121-2.

20 *Kitāb al-Ḥawādith*: 250-1; Ibn al-Ṭiqṭaqā, *al-Fakhrī*: 244, tr. Whitting: 324; ʿAwwād, *Khazāʾin*: 186-7. Among the books were "all the sciences", as well as dictionaries and works on rhetoric, sometimes compiled specifically for the vizier.

21 E. Kohlberg, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work: Ibn Tāwūs and his Library* (Leiden: Brill, 1992): esp. 71-90; Hirschler, *The Written Word*: 146.

22 E.g., Kutubī, *Fawāt*, 2: 264, Eche, *Bibliothèques*: 171; Hirschler, *The Written Word*: 134 and see below.

23 Quṭb al-Dīn al-Nahrawālī, *Kitāb al-iʿlām bi-aʿlām bayt allāh al-ḥarām* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1857): 182; cited e.g. in ʿAwwād, *Khazāʾin*: 33; al-Kattānī, *Maktabat*, 107.

Khan, Hülegü's grandfather, in the 1220s), suggest that by the 16th century, if not already by al-Qalqashandī's times, the Mongols' destruction of the books became a literary trope associated with the conquest of Baghdad and magnifying Mongol barbarity.²⁴

That said, however, the violent conquest and the subsequent sack of the city obviously harmed the Baghdadi book collections—not only directly due to the fires, floods, looting, and general chaos²⁵—but also indirectly. First, in the famine that immediately followed the conquest, Baghdadis had to sell their books and other valuables for next to nothing, in order to secure food. Book traders from Iraq and elsewhere were quick to exploit their distress.²⁶ More detrimental was the confiscation of Baghdadi books by the Mongols' agents, notably the above-mentioned Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī. Ṭūsī registered the books and

24 Notable earlier examples include the anonymous mid-14th-century chronicle *Mukhtaṣar akhbār al-khulafāʾ* ("Abridgement of the History of Caliphs") that claims that the Mongols built mangers from the books of the Baghdadi *ʿulamāʾ*. The fact that Mongol horses were usually fed on pasture, without mangers, does not give credibility to this description. See *Mukhtaṣar akhbār al-khulafāʾ* (Cairo: Būlāq, 1891): 137. For the book's dating, see M. Biran, "The Islamization of Hülegü: Imaginary Conversion in the Ilkhanate." *JRAS* 26 (2016): 82. Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), often quoted in Iraqi nationalist circles, says that the Mongols threw Muslim scientific books (*kutub al-ʿilm*) from Baghdadi libraries into the Tigris, just as the Muslims did with Persian books when they conquered al-Madāʾin (in the 7th century), in order to assert that "nothing has been transmitted to us from the old Persian sciences" (*Kitāb al-ʿibar* [Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1957], 3: 1106; 5: 1155). However, he refers not to the Mongols' "barbarism" but to the conquest as a watershed separating two periods. See A. Pistor-Hatam, "Ursachenforschung und Sinngebung: Die mongolische Eroberung Bagdads in Ibn Halduns zyklischem Geschichtsmodell." In *Die Mamluken: Studien zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur: Zum Gedenken an Ulrich Haarmann* (1942-1999), ed. S. Conermann and A. Pistor-Hatam (Hamburg: EB-Verlag, 2003): 313-34. Cf. the early-15th-century travelogue of the Andalusī Ibn al-Sabbāḥ, in which tearing books to pieces, throwing books into the Tigris, and killing scholars—albeit Shīʿites—are ascribed to the last Abbasid caliphs, al-Mustaʿṣir and al-Mustaʿṣim, and not to the Mongols. (*Nasabat al-akhbār wa-tadhkirat al-akhyār: riḥla ḥijāziyya*, ed. D. Jumʿa Shaykha [Tūnis: Maṭbaʿat al-Maghāribiyya lil-Ṭibāʾah wa-l-Nashr wa-l-Ishhār, 2011]: 235-7). The destruction of libraries as a *topos* preceded the Mongol conquest and is often used in relation to the destruction of the celebrated Fatimid libraries by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. In that case, the *topos* is used—similarly to Ibn Khaldūn's usage—to magnify the break between the Shīʿite Fatimid and the Sunni Ayyubids. See Hirschler, *The Written Word*: 129-31; F. Bora, "Did Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Destroy the Fatimids' Books? An Historiographical Enquiry." *JRAS* 25 (2015): 21-39.

25 See e.g. the case of Majd al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ṣamad al-Qaṭūfī who lost his book—a collection of sermons—during the conquest and mourns it nearly as he mourned his deceased son. Ibn Rajab, *al-Dhayl ʿalā tabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (Riyāḍ: Maktabat al-ʿUbaykān, 2005), 4: 135-42.

26 E.g. *Kitāb al-Ḥawāḍith*: 361; for selling books in times of crisis, see also Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 54: 80-81; 61: 192.

took a considerable number to Adharbaijan, the new political and intellectual center of the nascent Ilkhanate.²⁷ A similar process took place in 1276 during the Mongol conquest of Hangzhou, capital of the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279), where the conquering Mongol general, Bayan, made an inventory of the available books and maps, and took many of them with him to Dadu (Beijing), the Mongol capital.²⁸ The registration and amassing of books therefore seems to have been a coordinated Mongol policy, not an autonomous initiative of Ṭūsī. Ṭūsī returned to collect books from Baghdad (and Wāsiṭ) in 662/1263-4, thereby attesting that the city had a substantial stock of holdings to offer even after its fall. Most of these books ended up in the library of the observatory that Ṭūsī built for Hülegü in Maragha, which also included books confiscated from al-Jazīra (upper Mesopotamia), Syria and Khurasan.²⁹

3 The Functioning of the Libraries

Despite the conquest's atrocities, however, the Baghdadi colleges reopened soon after it. The Mustanṣiriyya, for example, although damaged during the siege, opened its gates only a year and a half after the conquest, with some of its original personnel, while the Niẓāmiyya resumed teaching in 658/1260, summoning lecturers from Basra.³⁰ Throughout the Ilkhanid period, the Mustanṣiriyya library continued to function as the main Baghdadi library. It still employed three types of librarians, and we can follow some of them from the conquest and up to the early 14th century, when Ibn al-Fuwaṭī left his job there.³¹ Even though being a librarian—and certainly being an assistant—was not a lucrative job,³² it may have carried a certain prestige, as we find quite

27 e.g. Dhahabī, *Ta'riḫh*, 58: 113-15; Ibn Faḍl-Allāh al-'Umarī, *Masālik al-abṣār wa-mamālik al-amṣār* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2010), 9: 114; J. A. Boyle, "The Longer Introduction to the *Zij-i Ilkhānī* of Naṣir ad-Dīn Ṭūsī." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 8 (1963): 246-7; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-al-nihāya* (Beirut: Dār Ihya' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1993), 15: 341-2; Šafadī, *al-Wāfi*, 1: 178-9.

28 Song Lian (comp.), *Yuanshi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976), 127: 3112, 162: 3802, 166: 3910; F. W. Cleaves, "The Biography of Bayan of the Barin in the Yuan Shih." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 19 (1956): 256.

29 Dhahabī, *Ta'riḫh*, 57: 10; Boyle, "Zij": 246-7; *Kitāb al-Hawādith*: 382.

30 E.g. *Kitāb al-Hawādith*: 376; Ma'rūf, *Mustanṣiriyya*, 1: 45-8; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma'*, 2: 125-6; 1: 309-10.

31 See Ma'rūf, *Mustanṣiriyya*, 2: 74-118.

32 In Abbasid times, a lecturer received 20 rotls (ca. pound) of bread and five of meat daily and 12 dinars as a monthly salary. A librarian received 10 rotls of bread and four of meat daily, and a monthly salary of 12 dinars; the assistant librarian (*mushrif*) five rotls of bread and two of meat daily, and only three dinars as monthly salary; a clerk also received three dinars but only four rotls of bread and one of meat daily. This was very

a few luminaries among the thirteen individuals identified among the post-conquest library personnel, notably the historians Ibn al-Sāʿī (d. 674/1276) and Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, and the calligrapher Yāqūt al-Mustaʿsimī (d. 698/1298). They may have benefitted from the uninterrupted access to books, paper and ink, which facilitated their careers as copyists and writers, and many simultaneously held other scholarly jobs.³³ Ibn al-Sāʿī, who was a librarian already in Abbasid Baghdad, held this position until 671/1272 and simultaneously served as a librarian in the Niẓāmiyya, to which he eventually endowed his books.³⁴ The abovementioned Ibn al-Fuwaṭī was connected to al-Mustaṣhiriyya for the longest period—ca. 25 years—serving as assistant librarian (*muṣhrif*) under at least three librarians, and finally succeeding Yāqūt al-Mustaʿsimī in 698/1298-9 as the main librarian. Both Yāqūt and Ibn al-Fuwaṭī were present when the Ilkhan Ghazan (r. 695-704/1295-1304) visited the Mustaṣhiriyya in 696/1296.³⁵

Other librarians included a physician, a Muslim military commander, and several lesser-known scholars from notable families.³⁶ The last identified library employee, perhaps the one who replaced Ibn al-Fuwaṭī as assistant librarian,

similar to a student's stipend (four rotls of bread and one of meat daily, two dinars and ten *qirāts* monthly). See Eche, *Bibliothèques*: 177. The Dominican missionary Riccoldo da Montecroce (c. 1243-1320), attests that Baghdadi college students were rather poor: (*The book of Pilgrimage*, tr. in R. George-Tvrtković, *A Christian Pilgrim in Medieval Iraq. Riccoldo da Montecroce's Encounter with Islam* [Turnhout: Brepols, 2012]: 212).

33 E.g. the librarians Fakhr al-Dīn al-Taftazānī (d. after 701/1301) and Majd al-Dīn Ibn al-Sāʿatī (fl. late 13th century) held teaching positions as assistant lecturers (*muʾīd*) (Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ*, 3: 145, 4: 510); the assistant librarian Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿAqūlī (d. 768/1366) was also a lecturer and *shaykh dār al-ḥadīth* in al-Mustaṣhiriyya (al-Jazarī, *Taʾriḫ ḥawādīth al-zamān wa-anbāʾihā wa-wafayāt al-akābir wa-l-aʿyān min abnāʾihā*, [Beirut and Sidon: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Baṣariyya, 1998], 2: 395; Ibn Rāfiʿ al-Sallāmī, *Taʾriḫ ʿulamāʾ Baghdād al-musammā muntakhab al-mukhtār* [Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-Aḥālī, 1938]: 185-6; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Durar al-kāmina* [Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1966], 3: 483); al-Ḥaddādī, the clerk, worked simultaneously both at the Muṣṭansiriyya and the Niẓāmiyya (Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ*, 5: 21).

34 See, e.g., al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtaṭāʾ ʿalā kitāb al-rawḍatayn* (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 2006), 1: 353-4; Dhahabī, *Taʾriḫ*, 58: 161-3.

35 Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ*, 5: 40.

36 Ibn Sāʿī was succeeded in 671/1272-3 by Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Makhzūmī (d. 681/1282), a noble Arab migrant from Central Asia famous for liberating and marrying al-Mustaʿsim's daughter in *Bilād al-Turk* (Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ*, 5: 112). Fakhr al-Dīn al-Taftazānī (d. after 701/1301), another migrant, succeeded him and Ibn al-Fuwaṭī was the latter's assistant (ibid., 3: 145). In 688/1289 Sanjar the physician replaced al-Taftazānī (ibid., 4: 456). Afterwards, in the early 1290s there were frequent changes of librarians: Majd al-Dīn Ibn al-Sāʿatī (fl. late 13th century), a scion of a notable Baghdadi family, was appointed after Sanjar, but soon asked to be replaced by the (unidentified) commander (*amīr*) ʿAbd-Allāh b. Yūsuf. The later was replaced by Shaykh Jamāl al-Dīn Mafākhīr al-Khālīdī, a relative of both Makhzūmī and Ibn al-Sāʿatī (ibid., 4: 510). In 696/1296-7 Yāqūt was already the librarian, but it is not clear when did his appointment begin.

was Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿAqūlī (d. 768/1366-7), son of one of the city's leading religious authorities and its inspector of endowments, who was a renowned scholar in his own right. He held the position until 728/1328.³⁷ The library staff was usually appointed, like the other college personnel, either by the inspector of the endowments, or by the city's governor (*ṣāhib dīwān*), sometimes on the basis of the previous librarian's recommendation.³⁸ In 1688/1289, however, the Ilkhan himself was involved in the appointment, as Sanjar the physician is reported to have arrived in the city with Ilkhan Arghun's edict (*firmān*) appointing him to the Mustanṣiriyya library.³⁹

The librarians seem to have made a concentrated effort to enlarge the library's collection by copying, compiling or purchasing books: Most librarians were also known as copyists. Yāqūt al-Mustaʿsimī was famous for acquiring and restoring valuable manuscripts from the caliphal library that had resurfaced in the Baghdadi markets. While the claim that he produced 1,001 Qur'an copies throughout his life should not be taken at face value, it certainly suggests that he was a prolific copyist.⁴⁰ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, also a talented and productive copyist, maintained close ties with the bookseller Qiwām al-Dīn al-Shaybānī (d. 730/1329-30), an expert in identifying and evaluating rare books. The latter used to offer the librarian the best copies of the precious books he found in Damascus.⁴¹ It is hard to tell, though, whether these books ended up in al-Mustanṣiriyya or at Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's private collection. In any case, the librarians were not acting in isolation. Any cursory look at the careers of the Mustanṣiriyya's scholars attests to the high number of books they produced, often commenting upon, summarizing, combining, or adding to previous works.⁴² At least some of these books must have found their way to the college's library, as gifts, bequests or copies produced for the students' sake.⁴³

37 See n. 33.

38 Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ*, 1: 209, 3: 145, 4: 510, 5: 112.

39 Ibid., 4: 456.

40 On Yāqūt, see, e.g., ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 10: 348; Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 60: 373-4; Kutubī, *Fawāt*, 2: 592-3; Canby, "Yāqūt al-Mustaʿsimī." In *EL2*, online edition.

41 Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ*, 3: 514.

42 See, e.g., the description of *Majmaʿ al-Bahrayn* ("Collection of the Two Seas"), compiled in al-Mustanṣiriyya by Muẓaffar al-Dīn Ibn al-Saʿātī (the librarian's father) around 690/1288: He combined *Mukhtaṣar al-Qudūrī* (d. 428/1037) and *Manẓūmat al-Nasafī* (d. 537/1142), "both very popular works of Ḥanafī law with additions, and in abridging it he utterly rearranged, improved and innovated it. Generally, he arranged it in a way by which the conflicting opinions among the *imām*, the *ṣāhibūn* and the *four imāms* are made known, and commented on it in two large volumes" (Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfi wa-l-mustawfā baʿd al-wāfi* [Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma lil-Kitāb, 2005], 1: 422).

43 E.g. Maʾrūf, *Mustanṣiriyya*, 1: 68-396, 2: 6-118; any superficial reading in Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's dictionary gives the same impression.

By the end of the 13th century at the latest, the library had regained its reputation, and was described as equal to, or even surpassing, the observatory library with its alleged 400,000 volumes.⁴⁴ Even though al-Maqrīzī's assertion that it contained the *Yasa* of Chinggis Khan⁴⁵ is probably false, its collection included many rare books—also in the fields of medicine and science—that impressed its various visitors, including the Ilkhan Ghazan. After reviewing the Baghdadi collections one such visiting scholar even exclaimed that “If it were not for my wife in Maragha, I would have moved to Baghdad.”⁴⁶ The visiting scholars—who also included military commanders—often used this opportunity to locate books required for their studies, or to order a copy of a certain unique book that they had lost.⁴⁷ This suggests that either al-Mustanşiriyya library or its nearby market had copyists and scriptoria to fulfil such orders.

Yet, the library first and foremost catered to the local community. The sources mention quite a few “regular readers” who used to frequent the library, busily copying its books. Some of them later donated their collections to the library, thereby further enlarging its inventory.⁴⁸ Readers and visitors could also borrow books from the library, yet it is hard to say how regular the loans were, since the evidence is anecdotal. Thus, the physician Ibn Qissīs (d. before 684/1285) produced in his youth a copy of Ibn Sinā's *Qānūn*, the textbook of Islamic medicine, which was kept in al-Mustanşiriyya. Many years later, the aged Ibn Qissīs borrowed the book, revising it considerably before returning it to the library, explaining that he was worried about his posthumous reputation.⁴⁹

In addition to the Mustanşiriyya, which remained the major cultural center of the city, other colleges and some *ribāṭs*—both old and new—had their own libraries that sometimes were wealthy enough to employ their own librarians (see table 1).⁵⁰ However, references to such libraries are rare, and usually connected to a specific employee, endowment, or disaster (e.g. flood). Nevertheless, it seems probable that pre-conquest libraries in learning institutions, which continued to operate after the conquest (e.g., Mashhad Abī

44 Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma'*, 3: 375; Ma'rūf, *Mustanşiriyya*, 2: 6off.

45 al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā'iz wa-l-i'tibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār fī miṣr wa-l-qāhira*, ed. M. Q. al-'Adawī (Bulaq: Dār al-Ṭibā'a al-Miṣriyya, 1854), 2: 220, cited in Ma'rūf, *Mustanşiriyya*, 2: 63.

46 Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma'*, 4: 127-8.

47 Ibid., 1: 185-6; 3: 375, 558-9; 4: 121, 127-8, 533; Ma'rūf, *Mustanşiriyya*, 2: 184-90.

48 Eche, *Bibliothèques*: 175-6; e.g., Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh*, 61: 348-9; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 5: 77-84; Ibn Rāfi', *Muntakhab*: 122-7; Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 2: 418-19.

49 Ibn al-'Ibrī, *Ta'rikh mukhtaṣar al-duwal* (3rd ed. Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1992): 273-4 For another example of borrowing books see Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma'*, 4: 121.

50 Ibid., 4: 464, 520, 5: 21; *Kitāb al-Ḥawādith*: 409; Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh*, 58: 161-3.

Ḥanīfa, the Qamariyya mosque, al-Madrasa al-Bashīriyya),⁵¹ would remain functioning as well. Moreover, establishing a library seemed to have been an integral part of the founding of new colleges or hospices,⁵² thus it is very likely that Ilkhanid Baghdad had many more libraries beyond those recorded in my table.

TABLE 1 The libraries of Ilkhanid Baghdad
a. Public libraries^a

Library	Founder and Date	Notes	Sources
Al-Mustanşiriyya Library (in Madrasa)	al-Mustanşir 631/1234	The main library in late Abbasid and Ilkhanid Baghdad; employed three librarians.	Maʿrūf, <i>Mustanşiriyya</i> , 2:57-120; ʿAwwād, <i>Khazāʾin</i> , 121-2.
Al-Nizāmiyya library (in madrasa)	Nizām al-Mulk 459/1066	Employed at least two librarians, one for its Nāşiriyya wing; Ibn al-Sāʿī endowed his books to it.	ʿAwwād, <i>Khazāʾin</i> , 151-4; Eche, 171; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, <i>Majmaʿ</i> , 2:284-5; 5:21.
ʿUbayd Allāh library (in madrasa); also called Mashhad ʿUbayd Allāh	al-Caliph al-Nāşir 575-622/1180-1225	Originally included Quʿran copies and “precious books”; destroyed in a flood in 725/1325; its books then were allegedly worth 10,000 dinar; in West Baghdad opposite to al-ʿIşmatiyya college.	Eche, 184; Al-Birzālī, <i>Muqtafā</i> , 4:475-6; Nuwayrī, <i>Nihāyat al-arab</i> , 33:192-3.

51 E.g., *Kitāb al-Ḥawādith*: 480; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ*, 1: 497-8, 5: 9; Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 4: 100-103; al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafā*, 2: 61; 4: 470; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, 59: 145-6; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Durar*, 1: 415-16; 2: 8-9, 42-3; Ibn Rāfiʿ, *Muntakhab*, 28, 44, 75-77.

52 See e.g. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ*, 4: 520 (al-Ribāṭ al-Majdī in Baghdad); 2: 517, when a patron bought books of *ḥadīth* and Qurʿan commentaries in order to renovate a college in Bujubird (near Hamadhan), and the newly-established colleges in table 1.

TABLE 1 The libraries of Ilkhanid Baghdad (*cont.*)

Library	Founder and Date	Notes	Sources
Al-Mujāhidiyya library (in madrasa)	? Opened in 637/1239	‘Abd al-Ḥaqq endowed his books to it in the 1330s; Ḥanbali; without endowment; In the late 14th century (774/1373) was considered the largest college in Baghdad; next to Ribāṭ dār al-falak near Dār al-khilāfa.	‘Awwād, <i>Khazā’in</i> : 276; <i>Kitāb al-Ḥawādith</i> : 157; Ibn Rafī’ <i>Muntakhab</i> : 135.
Al-Sharafiyya library (madrasa)	Sharaf al-Mulk, Seljuq official; 5th/11th century	Employed librarian; located in Khān Ziyād in the Sultan market. (originally in Bāb al-Tāq).	Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, <i>Majma’</i> , 4:464-5. Ṣafadī, <i>al-Wāfi</i> , 13:42.
The library of Ribāṭ al-Majdī	Majd al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn al-Athīr al-Qaṣrī (d. 685/1286), an administrator from Juwaynī’s circle. After 657/1259	?	Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, <i>Majma’</i> , 4:520.
The library of Ribāṭ al-Mustajadd (perhaps identical with al-Qamariyya mosque’s library)	al-Mustanṣir 626/1228	Employed librarian; active at least until 714/1314; in Dār al-Rūm.	Eche 186; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, <i>Majma’</i> , 3:25; <i>Kitāb al-Ḥawādith</i> : 16.

- a ‘Awwād mentioned another library, founded by al-Amīra Zāhida al-Abbāsiyya (d. 729/1328), probably al-Musta‘īm’s daughter by his son Mubārak, in a college she built, called al-Madrasa al-Zāhidiyya and later known as madrasat Sayyidi Khan. I was unable to find references to it. (‘Awwād, *Khazā’in*, 174).

TABLE 1 The libraries of Ilkhanid Baghdad (*cont.*)
b. Private Book collections

Owner	Owner's info	Books' info	Sources
Raḍī al-Dīn Ibn Tāwūs (d. 664/1266)	The leading Shi'ite authority in Baghdad in the mid-13th century; prolific writer; an early cooperator with the Mongols.	1500 books, 662 identified, 75% of religious studies.	Kohlberg, <i>A Medieval Muslim Scholar</i> ; 'Awwād, <i>Khazā'in</i> : 270-1.
Ibn al-Sā'ī (d. 674/1275)	Historian, librarian, Shāfi'i lawyer, Sufi, prolific writer.	Endowed his books to the Nizāmiyya college where he worked.	e.g., al-Birzālī, <i>al-Muqtafā</i> , 1: 353-4; Dhahabī, <i>Ta'rikh</i> , 58: 161-3; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, <i>Majma'</i> , 5:40.
Juwaynī, 'Aṭā Malik (d. 686/1283)	Historian, governor of Baghdad (1259- 1283); patron of many writers and scholars.	His library was based on books he had taken from the Alamut library, to which he had arrived with Hülegü; many of his protégés dedicated their books to him.	'Awwād, <i>Khazā'in</i> : 187-8; e.g., Juwaynī/. Qazwīnī, 3: 268-70; Juwaynī/ Boyle: 719-20.
Ghiyāth al-Dīn Ibn Tāwūs d. 693/1294	A Shi'ite lawyer and traditionalist, <i>naqīb al-Alīds</i> in Baghdad; prolific writer; nephew of Raḍī al-Dīn.	His collection included biographies, traditions, histories, poetry and stories. His house became a center of learning to scholars who used his books; ordered books from Ibn al-Fuwaṭī. May have inherited some of his uncle's collection.	'Awwād, <i>Khazā'in</i> : 271-2; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, <i>Majma'</i> , 2: 189, 225; 4: 244; 5: 65.

TABLE 1 The libraries of Ilkhanid Baghdad (*cont.*)

Owner	Owner's info	Books' info	Sources
Zayn al-Dīn ‘Alī b. Aḥmad b. Yūsuf b. al-Khaḍīr al-Āmidī al-Ḥanbalī (d. after 712/1312)	Book trader, polyglot, famous for his miracles; wrote a book about dream interpretation; impressed Ghazan during his visit in al-Mustansiriyya in 700/1300 and received a monthly salary of 300 dirham.	Owened a great collection of books that he allegedly knew extremely well even after getting blind; helped people locate rare books.	‘Awwād, <i>Khazā’in</i> : 272-3; Ṣafadī, <i>A’yān</i> , 3: 262-4; Ṣafadī, <i>Nukat al-himyān</i> : 206-8; Ibn Ḥajar, <i>Durar</i> , 3: 21.
Ibn al-Fuwaṭī (d. 722/1322)	Historian, librarian, copyist, polymath.	Famous for his extensive book collection, which included rare books acquired during his tenure in Maragha; Continued to collect books in Baghdad; Used to show his collection to visitors.	‘Awwād, <i>Khazā’in</i> : 273-5; E.g. Dhahabī, <i>Ta’rīkh</i> , 61: 210-11; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, <i>Majma’</i> , <i>passim</i> .
Ibn ‘Abd al-Haqq (d. 739/1338)	Scientist, poet, and author of <i>Marāṣid al-Iṭṭilā’</i> (an abridgement of Yāqūt’s geographical dictionary).	Left his books— including the 50 he compiled—to the Madrasa al-Mujāhidiyya.	‘Awwād, <i>Khazā’in</i> , 276; Ibn Rāfi‘, <i>Muntakhab</i> 1938, 122-7; Kutubī, <i>Fawāt al-wafayāt</i> , 2: 39.

TABLE 1 The libraries of Ilkhanid Baghdad (*cont.*)

Owner	Owner's info	Books' info	Sources
Ibn al-Tharda, 'Alā' al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm b. 'Alī b. Ma'tūq b. 'Abd al-Majīd b. Wafā' al-Wāsiṭī al-Baghdādī (d. 750/1349)	A Baghdadi preacher and poet who later migrated to the Sha'm, and lost his sanity.	Claimed that he had in Baghdad a collection of ca. 2000 volumes, but a group of merchants from Damascus stole it (or half of it).	'Awwād, <i>Khazā'in</i> : 276; Ibn Ḥajar, <i>Durar</i> , 3: 76; Ṣafadī, <i>A'yān</i> , 3: 250-1; Ṣafadī, <i>al-Wāfi</i> , 20: 308-310.

Impressive private book collections also continued to exist in Ilkhanid Baghdad. They were used for their owners' studies but often benefitted other scholars as well. Ibn Ṭāwūs's library, for example, survived the Mongol conquest. He left it to his sons, Muḥammad (d. 680/1281) and 'Alī (d. 711/1311), who succeeded him as the heads of the city's Shi'ite community (*naqibs*).⁵³ Part of the family's collection may have reached also Ibn Ṭāwūs' nephew, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 693/1294), also a prolific writer. The latter's house became a center of learning for the city's scholars due to his unique book collection, which he continued to expand.⁵⁴ Other private libraries belonged to famous scholars, many of whom still known today, such as 'Alā' al-Dīn Juwaynī, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, Ibn al-Ṣā'ī, and Ṣafī al-Dīn Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥaqq (d. 739/1338), the author of the geographical work *Marāṣid al-iṭṭilā'*.⁵⁵ Private collections of less renowned scholars are said to have included around 2000 volumes.⁵⁶

Some library owners were also booksellers: a famous one was the shaykh Zayn al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī (d. after 712/1312), who spoke Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Greek and Mongolian and was renowned for his miracles. He had an impressive

53 Kohlberg, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar*: 18, 81.
54 e.g. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma'*, 2: 189, 225; 4: 244; 5: 65. Ghiyāth al-Dīn may have inherited the collection of Muḥammad, who died childless.
55 See table 1b.
56 The library of the Baghdadi preacher Ibn al-Tharda contained 2000 volumes (Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 3: 8-9; Ṣafadī, *A'yān al-'aṣr wa a'wān al-naṣr* [Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1998], 3: 250-1). The library of the Rifā'ī shaykh 'Izz al-Dīn al-Farūthī (d. 693/1294) in Wāsiṭ included 2200 books (Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-al-nihāya* [Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1993], 13: 342; 'Awwād, *Khazā'in*: 272-7).

collection of books that he traded, and allegedly, even after going blind, he could recognize each of his books, locate it in his library (or store), and knew exactly not only what the topic of each book was, but also where the script changed hands or color. He was also celebrated for helping people to locate specific books, sometimes without reward. Zayn al-Dīn could afford this since he was awarded a generous monthly pension by Ghazan, who had met him during his visit to the Mustanşiriyya and was greatly impressed by his abilities.⁵⁷ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's close connections to book dealers were already mentioned. Books were valuable merchandise with a healthy demand, and book collectors were ready to pay high prices for rare or good quality books. Thus, migrants could sell their books to make a living,⁵⁸ and Mamluk *amīrs* could order books to be copied for them in Baghdad, since book sellers moved between Iraq, Syria and Yemen, even during the Mamluk-Ilkhanid war.⁵⁹ Baghdad had a thriving book market, a meeting point for scholars and merchants, and even in his last year, already half paralyzed, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī still visited it.⁶⁰ Moreover, Baghdad was famous for its book production—from the paper to the final manuscript—and many people earned their living from copying, illuminating, trading (and writing) books.⁶¹ Painters were summoned from Baghdad to Tabriz,⁶² and Baghdadi calligraphers were highly esteemed—and rewarded—even by neighboring rulers, from Yemen to Delhi.⁶³

4 Disseminating Knowledge

Baghdad maintained close and continuous connections with the Ilkhanate's other intellectual centers, mainly along the route between Adharbaijan—Tabriz, Maragha, or later Sultaniyya—and Baghdad.⁶⁴ Yet its scholarship and products were highly appreciated beyond Ilkhanid borders, not only in Yemen and Delhi but notably in Cairo and Damascus, the new centers of the

57 Şafadī, *A'yān*, 3: 262-4; idem, *Nukat al-himyan fi nukat al-'umyan* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Jamāliyya, 1911): 206-8; Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 3: 21.

58 E.g. Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh*, 61: 192; Şafadī, *A'yān*, 2: 244-6; 3: 250.

59 Şafadī, *al-Wāfī*, 8: 358-9; Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Manhal*, 2: 306-8; Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 2: 364-5; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma'*, 3: 514.

60 Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma'*, 5: 688.

61 E.g. M. S. Simpson, "The Role of Baghdad in the Formation of Persian Painting." In *Art et société dans le monde iranien*, ed. C. Adle (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1982): 91-116.

62 Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma'*, 1: 120.

63 Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 2: 99-100; Şafadī, *al-Wāfī*, 3: 173.

64 For numerous examples, see e.g. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma'*, 5: 667-688.

Arabic-Islamic world.⁶⁵ Migrants, merchants, envoys, and visiting students contributed to knowledge transmission,⁶⁶ so that books composed in Ilkhanid Baghdad were often widely disseminated.

A rare glimpse of how such knowledge transfer was actually practiced is provided by a case study of one book, *al-Maqāmāt al-zaynīyya* by Ibn Ṣayqal al-Jazarī (d. 701/1301). Ibn Ṣayqal, a Baghdadi grammarian, belles-lettrist and poet, who taught grammar at al-Mustanṣiriyya, compiled his work—an imitation of *Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*⁶⁷ dedicated to his son Zayn al-Dīn—in 672/1273, and presented it to ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Juwaynī. The latter highly appreciated it, proclaiming that it was better than the original, and rewarded the author with 1000 dinars. In Rabī‘ 11-Jumādā 11 676/ September-November 1277 Ibn Ṣayqal read his *magnum opus* aloud to the Baghdadi community in ten sessions that took place in al-Mustanṣiriyya’s open gallery (*riwāq*), adding some extra sessions in his house or at the nearby Ribāṭ al-Qaṣr. Luckily, two manuscripts of the work retained a list of the 160 people who attended the sessions and received a certificate of hearing (*samā’*) from the author to further transmit the book. The list reveals a unique picture of Baghdad’s scholarly community in a specific moment, exploring the consumers of the book and its initial circulation.⁶⁸

The listeners are explicitly described as belonging to elite scholarly circles, and indeed most of them were scholars.⁶⁹ They included the author’s colleagues at al-Mustanṣiriyya (15 lecturers, including librarians, about half of

65 E.g., ‘Umarī, *Masālik*, 10: 364, 367, 373, 375, 408; and Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 3: 240.

66 E.g., al-Dhahabī, *Ta’rīkh*: 60: 490-1; 61:192; Ibn Rāfi‘, *Muntakhab*: 213-15; Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 2: 34-5, 5: 111; 3: 453-6; 4: 90-1; Ṣafadī, *A’yān*, 1: 171; 2: 244-6, 4: 662; 5: 365; Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi*, 12: 264-5; Riccoldo, *Pilgrimage*: 212.

67 *Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī* (The Assemblies of al-Ḥarīrī) was a highly-popular *adab* work in rhyme prose compiled by the Basran scholar al-Ḥarīrī (d. 515/1122). See D. S. Margoliouth, and C. Pellat, “al-Ḥarīrī.” In *EL2*, online edition.

68 The list was first published in K. ‘Awwād and Ḥ. Maḥfūz, “Ṭabaqa min a’lām Baghdād,” *Majallat kulliyat al-adāb* 6 (1963): 249-64, based on a Leningrad manuscript, copied in Baghdad in 736/1336 from a manuscript copied from a version written by Ibn Ṣayqal himself. It was reprinted in Ma’rūf, *Mustanṣiriyya*, 2: 221-35. See also Ibn al-Ṣayqal al-Jazarī, *al-Maqāmāt al-zaynīyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Masīra, 1980): 49-56, where a Timurid manuscript based on the Leningrad one was also consulted.

69 “The imāms, the great ones (*al-kibār*), the scholars (*‘ulamā*), the leaders (*al-sāda*), the nobles (*fuḍalā*) the great (*‘uẓamā*)” (‘Awwād and Maḥfūz, *Ṭabaqa*: 263). I was able to identify about half of the listeners through biographical dictionaries, yet often even when they remained unidentified their titles (*shaykh*, *ṣadr*, *ra’īs* etc.) attest to their elite/scholarly status. For the difference between scholarly and popular reading sessions, see Hirschler, *The Written Word*: 32-81.

the staff) as well as at other Baghdadi institutions;⁷⁰ many fellow Qur'an reciters, grammarians, lawyers of the four schools, traditionists, judges (though the chief qāḍī attended only the opening session), Sufis and even dervishes (*faqīrs*). While none of the listed people is defined as a poet, quite a few of the identified scholars also wrote poetry, like the author. Also present were several merchants, cloth sellers, and physicians, as well as an engineer, an astronomer, a scribe, a paper maker, a painter, a weaver, a blacksmith and a tailor, although most of the artisans were also described as scholars. There was only one (unidentified) military commander and one liberated slave. The meetings were basically scholarly gatherings, but—like open lectures in modern universities—seemed to attract also some representatives of the educated public.

Attending such sessions was very much a family matter: the author's sons were present and quite a few listeners came with their sons, nephews, brothers and in one case even a grandson. In terms of age, the audience was very diverse: the youngest listener whom I have been able to identify was six years old, and the oldest over 90!⁷¹ It was also a male-only event: no woman is recorded, even though Baghdad had quite a few female traditionalists. There was a healthy presence of people from al-Jazīra in the crowd (ten people called al-Jazarī and others originating from various cities in the region). This implies that the author's fellow countrymen came to hear him, thereby suggesting that immigrants to Baghdad maintained a certain sense of diaspora. Judging by their *nisbas*,⁷² the attending individuals originated from all over Iraq (Mawṣil, Kūfa, Baṣra, Tikrit, Kāzarūn, Madā'in, Ḥilla, Shahrabān, Ba'qūbā), all over the Ilkhanate (al-Jazīra, Anatolia, Khūi and Urmiya in Adharbaijan, Kirmān, Ṭabaristān, Herat, Suhraward, Jājram etc), and also from further afield, from Damascus, Aleppo, Yemen, al-Maghrib, Samarqand, Farghāna and Bukhara. Given that 676/1277 was not a year when the Mongol court (*ordo*) came to Baghdad, and that the reading did not take place during the Hajj season, this cosmopolitan assembly of listeners is quite impressive.

70 Four from the Nizāmiyya, two from al-Bashīriyya, and one from each of the 'Iṣmātiyya, Sharābiyya, Madrasat al-Sa'āda and Madrasat Dār al-Dhahab.

71 The youngest was 'Abd al-Raḥīm b. Muḥammad al-Haddādī (671/1272-741/1340; Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 2:360-1); the oldest was Shams al-Dīn Ibn Ṣabbāgh, the Mustanṣiriyya's physician who died in 682/1283 or 683/1284 and was more than a hundred years old, thus was over 90 in 677 (e.g. Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh*, 60:171; 61:213-14; Ibn Rāfi', *Muntakhab*: 164; *Kitāb al-Ḥawāḍith*: 470).

72 *Nisba* is an adjective indicating the person's place of origin, tribal affiliation, ancestry or profession. While it does not always denote the person's actual birthplace (it may refer to his ancestors), it is still a certain indication to his original home.

At least seven attendees later migrated to the Mamluk Sultanate, while at least two others visited Syria and returned to Baghdad, thereby attesting to the continuous connections between the two realms even during times of war.⁷³ One of those migrants, Najm al-Dīn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Rab‘ī al-Baghdādī, who had been 15 years old when he heard the *Maqāmāt*, transmitted the work in Syria before settling in Cairo.⁷⁴ The Mamluk historian al-Ṣafadī recounted a local scholar reciting it in Cairo in 728/1328 on the authority of the above-mentioned Najm al-Dīn.⁷⁵ Al-Ṣafadī also had access to a copy written by the Baghdadi librarian Ibn al-Sā‘ātī, signed by the author and including the list of listeners, and—despite considerable literary criticism—he also prepared his own copy. The copy of the author’s son was the source of Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, who also had access to the list of attendees.⁷⁶ Moreover, two of the extant manuscripts of the work, currently in Calcutta and Istanbul, belonged to people who participated in the reading: the librarian Taftazānī, who in 679/1280 copied from the author’s manuscript, and a certain Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Samarqandī who may have recorded the text from the hearing.⁷⁷

In spatial terms, the reading of the *maqāmāt* reflects the three main arenas of transmission of knowledge: the scholarly center of the city—the Mustanṣiriyya; various smaller scholarly institutions (like Ribāṭ al-Qaṣr); and private homes, the same three arenas where libraries were located. The reciting is not mentioned in the Baghdadi chronicle, and was probably a rather routine event—like a series of lectures in any university. The myriad references in Ibn al-Fuwaṭī’s dictionary (and in the Mamluk sources) to Baghdadi people who heard books from scholars, received certificates of hearing (*samā’*) or license to transmit (*ijāza*), suggest that such a reading was indeed routine, thereby further testifying to the vitality of knowledge transmission in Ilkhanid Baghdad.

5 The Libraries’ Holdings

What books were available in the Baghdadi libraries? Although we have nothing comparable to the catalogue of the Ashrafiyya college in Damascus,

73 For the migrants see: Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 1: 453, 2: 375-6; Ibn Rāfi‘, *Muntakhab*: 107-8, 228; al-Jazarī, *Ḥawāḍith al-zamān*, 1: 183-4; al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafā*, 4: 105, 109; for the visitors: Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma’*, 2: 517, 500-1; al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafā*, 3: 348; Dhahabī, *Ta’rīkh*, 60: 339, 61: 60; al-Jazarī, *Ḥawāḍith al-zamān*, 2: 420-1.

74 Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 2: 375-6.

75 Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi*, 26: 76-77.

76 Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma’*, 2: 399-400.

77 Ibn Sayqal, *al-Maqāmāt*: 21-3.

masterfully studied by Hirschler,⁷⁸ a certain glimpse of the contents of the Baghdadi libraries can be gleaned from three available sources: the inventory of Ibn Ṭawūs (d. 664/1266), mentioned above, and two biographical dictionaries authored by famous Baghdadi librarians and book collectors that listed many titles. These are Ibn al-Sāʿī's *al-Durr al-thamīn fī asmā' al-muṣannifīn* ("The Precious Pearl of the Compilers' Names") compiled after 665/1266 and before 671/1272, and Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's *Majma' al-alqāb*, completed ca. 722/1322. I have already introduced Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's work, the surviving part of which mentions ca. 680 titles.⁷⁹ Ibn al-Sāʿī's compilation did not survive in full too, but the available portion, which covers most of the book, lists 3816(!) book titles.⁸⁰ The work, perhaps an attempt of the eminent late-Abbasid historian to preserve a repository of Islamic knowledge in the turbulent Mongol era, covers, like Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's book, the period from early Islam up to the author's present. Unlike the latter, however, it contains only a few contemporary authors, references to sources, and personal touches.⁸¹ Not all of the books mentioned in the two compilations were necessarily available in Baghdad's libraries in the 13th and 14th centuries—Ibn al-Sāʿī seemed to have relied upon former bibliographies and biographical dictionaries⁸²—but the recorded titles reflect the scope of books known to the librarians and attest to their broad intellectual horizons. A meticulous study of the books included in the two librarians' compilations, along the lines of Hirschler's and Kohlberg's works, is beyond the scope of the current study. Moreover, it will be less instructive due to the incomplete and non-documentary character of the two biographical dictionaries. However, a comparison of the three Baghdadi book lists—of Ibn Ṭawūs, Ibn al-Sāʿī, and Ibn al-Fuwaṭī—as well as juxtaposing them to the available Ashrafiyya catalog can provide some initial insights.

I originally expected the comparison to reveal a certain core curriculum or a common intellectual background. Instead, its most striking feature is the small overlap between the lists. I have found only 11 books that appear in all four

78 Hirschler, *Medieval Damascus*.

79 Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma'*, 6: 544-570 (index of the books mentioned in the text).

80 Ibn al-Sāʿī, *al-Durr al-thamīn fī asmā' al-muṣannifīn* (Tunis: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2009). The whole introduction apart from one paragraph is missing, as well as the letters *lām* to *yā*, although the book begins with the Muḥammads before shifting to the regular alphabetic order. For an index of the books mentioned in the text, see pp. 507-690.

81 Ibn al-Sāʿī, *al-Durr*, esp. 56-7. The book includes 418 biographies, 21 of them of people who lived in the 13th century but only six who lived after 1258 (Ibid: 6, 175, 176, 182, 249-50, 368-9, 393). The Mongols are mentioned only once in relation to someone who predicted their coming (Ibid: 150-1).

82 Such as the *Fihrist* (Catalogue) of Ibn al-Nadīm (d.385/995) or *The Dictionary of Authors* (*Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*) of Yāqūt (d. 626/1228). Ibn al-Sāʿī, *al-Durr*: 6.

compilations, which together hold nearly 6500 titles. There is a slightly higher but still small overlap of the lists of al-Ashrafiyya, Ibn al-Sāʿī and Ibn Ṭāwūs, which were all compiled around the same period, i.e., the 1260s-1270s: another 16 books in addition to the aforementioned 11, four of them by the notable theologian, jurist and Sufi al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111).⁸³ Even more remarkable is the small overlap among the three Baghdadi lists of Ibn al-Sāʿī, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī and Ibn Ṭāwūs—only seven more than the common 11. These “Baghdadi best-sellers” are listed in table 2:⁸⁴

TABLE 2 Books common to the Baghdadi Book lists

Author	Title	Genre
Ibn Saʿd (d. 230/845)	<i>Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr</i>	Biographies (early Islam)
Al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870)	<i>Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī</i>	Hadith
Muslim (d. 261/875)	<i>Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim</i>	Hadith
al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923)	<i>Tafsīr al- Ṭabarī</i>	Qurʾan commentary
al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923)	<i>Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa-lʾ-muluk</i>	Universal history (early Islam)
al-Ṣūlī (d. 335/947)	<i>al-Awrāq</i>	<i>Adab</i>
al-Ṣūlī (d. 335/947)	<i>Adab al-kātib ʿalā al-ḥaqīqa</i>	<i>Adab</i>
Thābit b. Sinān (d. c. 363/974)	<i>Taʾrīkh</i>	History (Buwayhid-Abbasid)
al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406/1015-6)	<i>Nahj al-Balāgha</i>	Sayings attributed to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib
Miskawayh (d.c. 421/1030)	<i>Tajārīb al-umam</i>	Universal History
al-Thaʿālibī (d. 429/1038)	<i>Yatīmat al-dahr fī maḥāsīn ahl al-ʿaṣr</i>	<i>Adab</i>
al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067)	<i>al-Miṣbāḥ al-kabīr</i>	Jurisprudence (Shiʿite)
al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067)	<i>al-Miṣbāḥ al-ṣaghīr</i>	Jurisprudence (Shiʿite)
al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067)	<i>al-Nihāya</i>	Jurisprudence (Shiʿite)

83 *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn; Minhāj al-ʿābidīn; al-Munkidh min al-ḍalāl; Naṣīḥat al-muluk*; the other books belong to the field of *adab* (3); early Islamic history (2); lexicography (2); *ḥadīth*, Qurʾan commentary, poetry, Stories of the Prophets, and bibliography (i.e., Ibn al-Nadīm’s *al-Fihrist*).

84 It is possible that I have missed a few titles that appear under different names in the various lists; even taking this possibility into account, however, the degree of overlap is still minimal.

TABLE 2 Books common to the Baghdadi Book lists (*cont.*)

Author	Title	Genre
al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071)	<i>Taʾrīkh Baghdād</i>	Biographies
Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad al-Hamadhānī al-Shāfiʿī (d. 521/1127)	<i>ʿUnwān al-siyar</i>	Biographies
ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī (d. 529/1134)	<i>Taʾrīkh Nishābūr</i>	Biographies
ʿImād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (d. 597/1201)	<i>Kharīdat al-qaṣr wa-jarīdat al-ʿaṣr</i>	<i>Adab</i>

Bold stands for books appearing also in the Ashrafiyya’s catalog.

Unsurprisingly, the list includes mostly well-known works, which exists today. The only exception is *ʿUnwān al-siyar* (*The title of biographies*), a collection of biographies the author of which, defined as “the seal of Baghdadi historians,”⁸⁵ selected from his various other publications. With the exception of ʿImād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, who worked in Damascus, all the authors were active in Baghdad or east of it. In terms of genre, about half of this list is from the field of literature (*adab*, biographies, history), as opposed to religious studies or in Hirschler’s terms transmitted sciences (Hadith, Qura’n commentary, jurisprudence, Saying attributed to ʿAlī, early Islamic history) and this is true both for the Baghdadi list and the 11 books it shared with al-Ashrafiyya. The high amount of literary works fits with Hirschler’s findings on the Ashrafiyya library, where poetry and *adab* vastly exceed the transmitted sciences.⁸⁶ The significant amount of Shiʿite works included in the list is not only due to the inclusion of Ibn Ṭāwūs’s collection, but because of the blurred lines between Sunnism and Shiʿism, which was typical to the Ilkhanate and the late medieval Persianate world.⁸⁷

Hirschler noted the small overlap between al-Ashrafiyya’s catalog and Ibn al-Sāʿī’s work, ascribing it to the provincial character of both collections

85 By Ibn al-Najjār, cited in Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi*, 4: 38 as quoted in S. A. al-Hajeri, *A Critical Edition of the Eleventh Volume of ʿIqd al-juman fi taʾrikh ahl al-zamān*. PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2007: 948. On al-Hamadānī and his work, parts of which survived through citation in Mamluk compilations, see Ibid: 946-57; text at 958-1099.

86 Hirschler, *Ashrafiyya*: 102-32, esp. 106.

87 Ibid: 125.

(and cities).⁸⁸ However, the overlap between Ibn al-Sāʿī's listed book titles and the Ashrafiyya catalog (209 out of the 1277 Ashrafiyya titles, 16.3% of the Ashrafiyya books and 5.47% of Ibn al-Sāʿī's titles) is greater than the overlap between *al-Durr al-Thamīn* and the other Baghdadi collections: 72 out of the 662 identified works in Ibn ʿIwān's catalog and 62 out of the 680 in Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's index. There is even a slightly larger overlap between Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's list and the Ashrafiyya catalog (67 out of 680 books; i.e., 5.24% of the Ashrafiyya books) than between Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's list and that of his teacher Ibn al-Sāʿī (only 1.62%).⁸⁹ This minimal overlap thus derives not from provinciality but from the diverse holding profiles of different book collections.⁹⁰ More important, it attests to the wide selection of titles available in Ilkhanid Baghdad.

The most revealing list for the Mongol period is obviously that of Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, which was compiled in the early decades of the 14th century, more than half a century after the other compilations, and some 70 years into Ilkhanid rule. Furthermore, it includes a significant number of contemporaneous books—a fact that itself attests to the flourishing of the Baghdadi intellectual scene. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's list reflects his own interests: it includes a much greater number of local biographical dictionaries (*taʾrīkh*) and lists of teachers (*mashyakhas*), both essential genres for locating biographical information. Also apparent is the role of poetry, in the form of both collections (*dīwāns*) and anthologies, as well as in two biographical dictionaries of poets authored by Ibn al-Fuwaṭī.⁹¹ The abundance of verses quoted throughout Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's work also makes plain the importance of poetry in the social and scholarly life of Ilkhanid Baghdad, a fact that was probably reflected also in the libraries.⁹² Other genres include religious studies—*ḥadīth*, Qurʾān, law, Arabic grammar and lexicography—as well as history and *adab* books and the occasional book of, for instance, medicine, astronomy, philosophy, Sufism, mirror for princes or hunting. My impression is that, just like in the Ashrafiyya catalog, literary works—histories, biographies, *adab* and poetry—are more prominently represented than are the purely religious sciences. This may have something to do

88 Ibid: 138.

89 The data has no statistical value, due to the incomplete condition of the Baghdadi lists and the major differences between their holders.

90 Hirschler, *The Written Word*: 145-63.

91 Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ*, 6: 556-557, 559, 569; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's works are *Shuʿarāʾ al-ʿaṣr* ("Poets of the Era"), *Ibid*, 2: 305, 542, 5: 25-6; and *Naẓm al-durar al-naṣīʿa fī shuʿarāʾ al-mīʾa al-sābiʿa* ("Anthology of the Emerging Pearls on the Poets of the 7th [hijri] Century"), *Ibid*, 1: 261-2, 392-3; 2: 175-6, 367-8.

92 This is comparable to Hirschler's finding about al-Ashrafiyya (Hirschler, *Ashrafiyya*: 106-12), though the pre-Islamic poetry that is abundant there hardly features in Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's work.

with the Mongols' preference for subsidizing works of science and literature, and not purely religious titles.⁹³

Another feature of Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's list is the larger number of Persian works it contains in comparison to the other Baghdadi lists.⁹⁴ They include the two main Persian histories of the Mongols, Juwaynī's *Jahān gushāy* ("History of the World Conqueror");⁹⁵ and Rashīd al-Dīn's *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh* ("Compendium of Chronicles");⁹⁶ two popular narrative poems by Niẓāmī (d. 1209), *Khusrū wa-Shīrīn* and *Laylī wa-Majnūn*;⁹⁷ poetry collections (*dīwāns*) of Mu'izzī (d. ca. 519-21/1125-7) 'Unṣūrī (d. 431/1039-40) and al-Lāmi'ī (d. after 460/1067), which Ibn al-Fuwaṭī obtained in Adharbaijan,⁹⁸ and several contemporaneous *Shāhnāmas* ("The Book of Kings", the Iranian national epic). One was an Arabic translation of the *Shāhnāma* of Firdawsī (d. 411/1020), compiled in Ayyubid Damascus, which Ibn al-Fuwaṭī saw probably after the book had been taken by the Mongols.⁹⁹ The other three versions, all Persian, expand upon the original compilation: they include an illuminated *Shāhnāma*, which enumerates Hülegü among the Persian kings authored by the Anatolian scholar al-Qānī' Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. Banjīr al-Kāzarūnī, famous for his extant verse of the animal fable *Kalīla wa-Dimna*. The latter presented his work at Hülegü's court in 660/1262, gained a generous reward, and the book was kept in the observatory's library.¹⁰⁰ Another *Shāhnāma*, also including a continuation (*dhayl*), was apparently composed in Baghdad by Majd al-Dīn Biḥzād b. Badal b. Ismā'īl al-Basawī, a poet in the service of al-Musta'ṣim's Turkmen councilor, Sulaymān Shāh, who migrated to Adharbaijan after 656/1258.¹⁰¹ Kamāl al-Dīn al-Zanjānī (d. after 706/1306), a poet from Rashīd al-Dīn's circle well versed in both Arabic and Persian, who spent time in Baghdad, Tabriz and Maragha, compiled for

93 Ibn al-Ṭīqtaqā, *al-Fakhrī*: 23, tr. Whitting: 16.

94 Ibn Ṭāwūs's list includes no Persian titles (Kohlberg, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar*: 89); I have found one Persian title in Ibn al-Sā'ī's list, although some of the Arabic titles may have been Persian; the Ashrafiyya catalogue includes 44 Persian titles or 2% (!) of the total—a rather impressive quantity. See Hirschler, *Ashrafiyya*: 113-5.

95 Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma'*, 2: 211, 377; 3: 369; 4: 25.

96 Ibid., 4: 25, 264, 5: 40 (though it might have been available to Ibn al-Fuwaṭī in its Arabic version).

97 Ibid., 4: 393.

98 Ibid., 4: 78; on the Seljuq and Ghaznawid poets, see J. S. Meisami, "Mu'izzī." In *El2*, online edition; J. T. P. de Bruijn, "'Unṣūrī." In *El2*, online edition; J. W. Clinton, "Lāmi'ī." In *El2*, online edition.

99 Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma'*, 3: 520. The work was composed for al-Malik al-Mu'azzam 'Īsā (r. 594-624/1198-1227) by Qawwām al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (d. 643/1245).

100 Ibid., 3: 317.

101 Ibid., 4: 411.

Ghazan a history (*aḥwāl*) of the Turkic kings, which followed the *Shāhnāma* format.¹⁰² Furthermore, a Daylami poet and historian adept in Persian poetry and employed in Mongol administration in Iraq, whom Ibn al-Fuwaṭī met in Baghdad in 703/1304, wrote a versified narrative (*qiṣṣa*) of “the Great Sultan Ghazan b. Arghun” probably in Persian as well.¹⁰³ In quite a few biographies, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī mentions that scholars wrote books and poetry in both Persian and Arabic, and he himself authored a Persian anthology (*al-Majmū‘ al-fārsī*), which included selections of contemporaneous Persian poetry.¹⁰⁴ These examples all attest to the vitality of the Persian language in Ilkhanid Baghdad, which is easily explained by the large number of Iranian migrants in the city’s administration and colleges, as well as by the position of Persian as a *lingua franca* in the Mongol Empire.¹⁰⁵ It also illustrates how the history of the Mongols had been integrated into both Iranian and Islamic history, a trend intensified after Ghazan’s Islamization.¹⁰⁶

6 The Mongols’ Role

What was the Mongols’ part in this thriving intellectual activity? Despite Ghazan’s visit in the Mustanṣiriyya library, the Ilkhans were not direct patrons of the libraries. However, they contributed to the flourishing of the city’s book culture, albeit indirectly, in several ways. First, the Mongols secured the economic basis for Baghdad’s scholarship by maintaining the endowments (*awqāf*) that provided for the scholars and their institutions. This was true from the time of the conquest, perhaps partly due to al-Ṭūsī’s influence,¹⁰⁷ but mainly because the Mongols understood that investment in scholarly institutions was a powerful tool for co-opting the religious and social elites in the Muslim realms. The maintaining of the endowments, which enabled the Mongols to pay salaries to quite a few scholars, is comparable to the rights conferred in

102 Ibid., 4: 99; 5: 85.

103 Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma‘*, 4: 328.

104 Ibid., 3: 37.

105 D. O. Morgan, “Persian as a *Lingua Franca* in the Mongol Empire.” In *Literacy in the Persianate World: Writing and the Social Order*, ed. B. Spooner and W. L. Hanaway (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012): 160–70.

106 For further examples of non-surviving works mentioned in Ibn al-Fuwaṭī’s book and relevant for Mongol history see DeWeese, “Cultural Transmission”: 28–9.

107 Lambton, “Awqāf in Persia: 6th–8th/12th–14th Centuries.” *Islamic Law and Society*, 4/3 (1997): 304–5.

China upon the Confucian households (*ruhu*), an indigenous elite that also received pensions for continuing developing their culture.¹⁰⁸

Endowment supervisors were appointed from the early days of Mongol rule in Baghdad, and included persons of great scholarly stature such as Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Urmawī (d. 693/1294) in Hülegü's time, and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274) and his descendants after him. The local overseer seems to have been appointed either by the Ilkhans themselves, or by the department of endowments that administrated the *awqāf* throughout the Ilkhanate. These overseers, sometimes together with the city's governor (*ṣāhib dīwān*), appointed the colleges' staff, including that of the libraries. The ability to secure the relative prosperity of the scholarly elite certainly contributed to the quick post-conquest restoration.¹⁰⁹

Second, the Mongols and their officials functioned as patrons of scholarly activity, starting here too nearly immediately after the conquest: Hülegü's interest in intellectuals is attested even in Chinese sources,¹¹⁰ and we find scholars from Baghdad and elsewhere dedicating books to him—from the illuminated copy of the *Shāhnāma* mentioned above to one of Ibn Ṭāwūs's works.¹¹¹ This patronage continued under subsequent Ilkhans, even before

108 F. W. Mote, "Chinese Society under Mongol Rule." In *The Cambridge History of China*. Vol. 6: *Alien Regimes and Border States 907-1368*, ed. H. Franke and D. Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 635-8.

109 Lambton, "Awqāf in Persia: 6th-8th/12th-14th Centuries." *Islamic Law and Society* 4: 304-6; see Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's biography of 'Imād al-Dīn Qazwīnī (d. 660/1262), the deputy of the first Mongol governor of Iraq: "When God performed his verdict and ability and killed the Caliph, when Baghdad was devastated, its central mosque burned, and the houses of God deserted, then Allāh showed his grace, causing the appointment of 'Imād al-Dīn. He came [to Baghdad], built mosques and colleges, and restored the shrines and hospices. He gave salaries to scholars, lawyers, and Sufis from the endowments of these places, and the glory of Islam came back to the city of peace" (Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma'*, 2: 125-6, my italics; see M. Biran, "Violence and Non-Violence in the Mongol Conquest of Baghdad." In *Violence in Islamic Thought from the Mongols to European Imperialism*, ed. R. Gleave and I. Kristó-Nagy. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018): 15-31.

110 See Yoichi Isahaya, "Who is FWMNJ1," paper given at the Maghara workshop, 14-15 December 2013, citing Gao Min's 1261 introduction to a collection of medical works (*Rumen Shiqin*) by Zhang Zhihe. See also Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*, ed. B. Karīmī (Tehran: Iqbāl, 1338/1960), 2: 734; tr. in Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jamī'ut-Tawarikh: A Compendium of Chronicles by Rashiduddin Fazlullah* [sic], tr. W. M. Thackston (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 2: 513; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma'*, 3: 281; R. Amitai, "Hülegü and his Wise Men: Topos or Reality?" In *Politics, Patronage, and the Transmission of Knowledge*: 15-34; M. Biran, "Music in the Conquest of Baghdad: Safi al-Din Urmawi and the Ilkhanid Circle of Musicians." In *The Mongols' Middle East*: 133-54; G. Lane, "Intellectual Jousting and the Chinggisid Wisdom Bazaars," *JRAS* 26 (2016): 235-49.

111 Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma'*, 3: 317; Kohlberg, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar*: 12.

Mongol Islamization, mainly for works of science and literature.¹¹² Moreover, it seems that the price paid for books was much higher during the period of the Ilkhanate than beforehand: while the noted historian Ibn al-Sāʿī received 100 dinars for books commissioned by the Caliph al-Nāṣir or the Atabeg al-Zangī, the reward for books made by order in Ilkhanid Baghdad was often in thousands.¹¹³ Patronage came not only from the Mongol rulers themselves but also from their officials, some of whom acquired considerable fortunes. In Baghdad 'Alā' al-Dīn Juwaynī was justly famous for his generous support of various scholars, not least for restoring the knowledge lost by the upheavals of the Mongol conquests (mainly of his homeland, Khurasan, in the 1220s).¹¹⁴ Yet there is an exaggerated tendency to credit to Juwaynī—the educated Muslim Persian bureaucrat—the entire cultural restoration of Baghdad.¹¹⁵ The positive descriptions of the Ilkhans in the Baghdadi chronicle that gives a grim portrayal of the conquest's horrors, suggest that Baghdadis were aware of the Mongols' role in the city's revival.¹¹⁶

The Mongols' third contribution to Baghdad's intellectual life was in the establishment of their winter pastures in Baghdad's vicinity. This means that the Ilkhans and their *ordo* frequented the city, thereby boosting its economy and broadening its intellectual horizons. True, the arrival of the Mongol court, especially when accompanied by an army on its way to Syria (or on its way back, usually defeated) could also be a real burden for the city.¹¹⁷ Yet, in general, the presence of the *ordo* meant many opportunities—economic and cultural—and plenty of work for the city's copyists who strove to keep with their deadlines. Many scholars used to accompany the *ordo*, thereby contributing to close connections between the city and the north-eastern intellectual centers

112 Ibn al-Ṭīqṭaqā, *al-Fakhrī*: 23, tr. Whitting: 16.

113 Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh*, 59: 82; 58: 161-3; Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 2: 99-100; Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi*, 3: 173.

114 Juwaynī, *Ta'rikh-i jahān-gushāy*, ed. M. M. Qazwīnī (Leiden: Brill, 1912-37), 1: 2-4; Juwaynī, *History of World Conqueror*, tr. J. A. Boyle (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997): 4-6.

115 J. Abbasi, "Reconstruction of Baghdad after the Mongol Invasion: Ata Malik Juvayni's Tenure of Office (1259-1282)." In *İslâm Medeniyetinde Bağdat (Medînetü's-Selâm) Uluslararası Sempozyum*, ed. İ. S. Üstün. (Istanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi, İslam Tarihi ve Sanatları Bölümü, 2011): 283-92; for a more rounded evaluation, see H. Gilli-Elewy, "The Mongol Court in Baghdad: The Juwaynī Brothers between Local Court and Central Court". In *Court Cultures in the Muslim World, Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. A. Fuess and J.-P. Hartung (London: Routledge, 2011): 168-81.

116 E.g. *Kitāb al-Ḥawādith*: 453.

117 E.g. *Kitāb al-Ḥawādith*: 453, 461, cf. 531-2.

of Tabriz, Maragha and Sultaniyya.¹¹⁸ Under Öljeitü, the *ordo* also included a mobile college (*al-madrasa al-sayyāra*) that recruited some of its lecturers in Baghdad.¹¹⁹ The fact that under Öljeitü, the Ilkhan who spent more time in Baghdad than any of his predecessors, the city was described as “heaven upon earth” may not be a coincidence.¹²⁰

Finally, Mongol rule also directly impacted the form and content of the Baghdadi intellectual scene, though this is not emphasized in the Muslim sources. The relative prevalence of Persian language and literature has already been mentioned, but several Baghdadi scholars and administrators were fluent also in Mongolian, sometimes acquired during captivity.¹²¹ Persons, events and books related to Mongol history were mentioned in Ibn al-Fuwaṭī’s biographical dictionary; indeed, he was accused of being too sympathetic to the Mongols.¹²² Mongol rule brought many new migrants to Baghdad, including the Mongols themselves, Iranian administrators, Jews from the Caucasus and beyond, Catholics from Europe and Nestorian Önggüts from China, as well as scholars from all over the Muslim world. Under Mongol rule, Jews and Christians, both newcomers and old hands, were more involved in the city’s intellectual life. Thus, Riccoldo da Montecroce, who studied Arabic and Islam in Baghdad in the 1290s, praised Muslim scholarship and the welcoming reception of the Muslim elite to foreigners interested in their doctrines.¹²³ The Jewish philosopher Ibn Kammūna (d. 683/1284), another protégé of Juwaynī, corresponded with the leading Muslim scholars of the era in Baghdad and Tabriz, and taught in his home students—including Muslims.¹²⁴ The anti-Muslim polemics that both Riccoldo and Ibn Kammūna authored in the late 13th century (nearly costing the latter his life), the refutation of Ibn al-Kammūna’s work by Ibn al-Sā’atī (d. 694/1295), the librarian’s father,¹²⁵ as well as other inter-confessional debates—Jewish-Christian, inter-Christian, inter Jewish and

118 E.g. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ*, 1: 175-6, 392-3; 2: 61,530, 538, and see also his own travels between Baghdad and Adharbaijan summarized in Maʿrūf 1: 85-100.

119 E.g., Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ*: 3: 438-9.

120 Ibid, 2: 433.

121 E.g., Šafadi, *Nukat al-Himyān*: 206-8; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ*, 2: 488, 4: 366, 5: 287; E. A. Wallis Budge, tr. *The Monks of Kublai Khan* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1928): 49.

122 Ibn Rajab, 4: 452-3; and see DeWeese, “Cultural Transmission”: 11-29.

123 Riccoldo da Montecroce, *Pilgrimage*: 211-14 (and cf. his very different impression of the Tatars: 188).

124 Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ*, 1: 190; *Kitāb al-Hawādith*: 476; R. Pourjavady and S. Schmidtke, *A Jewish Philosopher of Baghdad: ʿIzz al-Dawla Ibn Kammūna (d. 683/1284) and His Writings* (Leiden: Brill, 2006): esp. 8-22.

125 Ibn Rāfiʿ, *Muntakhab*: 35-6; Ibn al-Taghrībirdī, *al-Manhal*, 1: 420-23.

inter Muslims—that took place in the city and its environs,¹²⁶ also reflect the religious pluralism of Mongol rule.

Yet Ilkhanid cosmopolitanism was best attested through material culture: Thus the map attached to the *ʿAjāʾib al-makhlūqāt* (“The Marvels of Creation”) by the cosmographer Zakariyā b. Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī (d. 682/1283), yet another Juwaynī protégé, depicted China as a major subcontinent on a par with India and Africa, thereby departing from previous conventions, unlike the work’s more conservative text.¹²⁷ More revealing are the surviving Baghdadi illuminated manuscripts. While *the Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-ṣafā* (copied 686/1287) represents the zenith of the pre-conquest Abbasid painting, the manuscripts of the Persian works—Saʿd-al-Dīn Warāwīnī’s *Marzbān nāma* (copied 689/1299) and Juwaynī’s *Taʾrikh-i Jahān gushā* (copied 698/1290)—all written by Iranian scribes, combine elements of Arabic painting with considerable Far Eastern influence. They were described as signifying “the birth of Ilkhanid painting.”¹²⁸ Baghdad’s markets featured Chinese and Egyptian textiles as well as Mongolian food.¹²⁹ Mongol rule clearly left its mark on the city in ways much more varied and nuanced than just the conquest’s demolition.

7 Conclusion

The laments on the destruction of the Baghdadi libraries under Mongol rule are vastly exaggerated. Despite the violent conquest, Baghdad’s learning institutions and intellectual community resurfaced a short while after 1258 with the active support of the Ilkhans, long before they embraced Islam. The Mustanṣiriyya library retained its prominent role in the city’s life, and smaller libraries existed in scholarly institutions—both old and newly established—while private collections thrived. Furthermore, book production, the book trade and scholarly life all continued to flourish. By the end of the 13th century the Baghdadi libraries regained their reputation, housed a wide selection of books on multiple subjects, and continued to contribute significantly to the development of Arabo-Islamic culture, a trend that Ilkhanid Islamization

126 Perlmann, Moshe, tr. and annot. *Ibn Kammūna’s Examination of the Three Faiths: A Thirteenth-Century Essay in the Comparative Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Riccoldo da Montecroce, *Pilgrimage*: 200, 202-3, 210; Ibn Rajab, *Ḍhayl*, 4: 447; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, 2: 154-7; See also Jackson’s article in this volume.

127 H. Park, *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 129-31; T. Lewicki, “al-Ḳazwīnī, Zakariyyā’ b. Muḥammad.” In *El2*, Online edition.

128 Simpson, “The Role of Baghdad”: 91-116.

129 Qāshānī, *Taʾrikh-i ʿUljāyū* (Tehran: BTNK, 1969): 121; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ*, 1: 322.

facilitated. The Mongols supported the Baghdadi scholarly community, mostly indirectly, not least by retaining the endowments that secured the scholars' salaries and the libraries' upkeep. They also impacted the city's intellectual scene, mainly by encouraging migration—both temporary and permanent—into the city. With the Mongol conquest, Baghdad lost its position as the symbolic center of the Caliphate and the Muslim world, but it became an important city in the multi-cultural, cosmopolitan and multi-centered Ilkhanate that was famed in the Iranian-Turkic world for its cultural efflorescence. Baghdad remained a center of book production and manuscript illumination under the Ilkhanids' successors, the Jalayirids, as well,¹³⁰ and Baghdadi calligraphers, musicians and painters are among those mentioned in Safavid works as major representatives of the Ilkhanid cultural achievement.¹³¹

We are compelled, then, to ask: Why has the *topos* of Mongol destruction of Baghdadi libraries been so enduring? A full answer to this question is beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it here to say that it became popular mainly in the Arabic-speaking world, where it benefitted from the existing pre-Mongol *topos* of the destruction of libraries as a symbol of historical break,¹³² and from the amplification of the disastrous nature of the Mongol conquest of Baghdad in the post-Ilkhanid Mamluk Sultanate.¹³³ The *topos* was also boosted by later conquests of the city, especially by the Turco-Mongol Tamerlane in 795/1392-3 and 803/1401, but also by the Turkic Qara Qoyunlu in 803/1410 and the Ottoman Turks in 941/1534, all of which also contributed to the city's marginalization.¹³⁴ With the rise of Arab nationalism in the 19th century, the *topos* was revived as part of the decline paradigm and adopted by Iranian and Turkic nationalists too. Recently it was given another boost by the 2003 American conquest of Iraq, which made the Mongols a popular analogy for western belligerence.¹³⁵ Medieval and modern agendas, however, should

130 P. Wing, *The Jalayirids: Dynastic State Formation in the Mongol Middle East* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016): 191-4.

131 E.g. Khwāndamīr, *Ḥabīb al-siyar* (Tehran: Chāpkhanah-i Haydarī, 1333/1956), 2: 338-41; 3: 107; *ibid.* tr. Thackston (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1994), 3: 60.

132 Hirschler, *The Written Word*: 129-32; Bora, "Salāh al-Dīn".

133 Biran, "Violence".

134 E.g., Ma'rūf, *al-Mustanşiriyya*: 1: 49-52.

135 A. Pistor-Hatam, "History and Its Meaning in the Islamic Republic of Iran: The Case of the Mongol Invasion(s) and Rule." In *Perceptions of Iran: History, Myths and Nationalism from Medieval Persia to the Islamic Republic*, ed. A. Ansari (London: Tauris, 2014): 147-62; for the impact of nationalism on the Mongol image in the Muslim world see M. Biran, *Chinggis Khan* (Oxford: OneWorld, 2007): 128-36.

not prevent us from appreciating the scholarly achievements and lively book culture that existed in Ilkhanid Baghdad and its libraries.

Abbreviations

- El2* *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edition (see under Bearman)
El3 *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 3rd edition (see under Fleet)
JRAS *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*

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